

September is Food Safety Month: Egg Safety

Eggs are one of nature's most economical and nutritious foods. However, bacterium *Salmonella* can be on both the outside and inside of eggs that appear to be normal and, if the eggs are eaten raw or undercooked, the bacterium can cause illness.

What can I do to reduce my risk of getting *Salmonella* from eggs?

Eggs, like meat, poultry, milk, and other foods, are safe when handled properly. Shell eggs are safest when stored in the refrigerator, individually and thoroughly cooked, and promptly consumed. The larger the number of *Salmonella* present in the egg, the more likely it is to cause illness. Keeping eggs adequately refrigerated prevents any *Salmonella* present in the eggs from growing to higher numbers, so eggs should be kept refrigerated until they are used.

Cooking reduces the number of bacteria present in an egg; however, an egg with a runny yolk still poses a greater risk than a completely cooked egg. Undercooked egg whites and yolks have been associated with outbreaks of *Salmonella* infections. Both should be consumed promptly and not be kept warm or at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

What are the specific actions I can take to reduce my risk of a *Salmonella* infection?

1. Keep eggs refrigerated at $\leq 45^{\circ}\text{F}$ ($\leq 7^{\circ}\text{C}$) at all times.
2. Discard cracked or dirty eggs.
3. Wash hands, cooking utensils, and food preparation surfaces with soap and water after contact with raw eggs.
4. Eggs should be cooked until both the white and the yolk are firm and eaten promptly after cooking.
5. Do not keep eggs warm or at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
6. Refrigerate unused or leftover egg-containing foods promptly.
7. Avoid eating raw eggs.
8. Avoid restaurant dishes made with raw or undercooked, unpasteurized eggs. Restaurants should use pasteurized eggs in any recipe (such as Hollandaise sauce or Caesar salad dressing) that calls for raw eggs.
9. Consumption of raw or undercooked eggs should be avoided, especially by young children, elderly persons, and persons with weakened immune systems or debilitating illness.

Who is most at risk for getting *Salmonella*?

The elderly, infants, and those with impaired immune systems may have a more severe illness. In this group, the infection may spread from the intestines to the blood stream, and then to other body sites and can cause death unless the person is treated promptly with antibiotics.

How do I know if I have *Salmonella*?

A person infected with the *Salmonella* bacterium usually has fever, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea beginning 12 to 72 hours after consuming a contaminated food or beverage. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most people recover without antibiotic treatment. However, the diarrhea can be severe, and the person may be ill enough to require hospitalization.

The Macomb County Environmental Health Program can assist with any further questions regarding the egg recall; contact them at 586-469-5236.

Source: Center for Disease Control
EJL_2010

